

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1. (currently amended): A latching system comprising:

- (a) a base;
- (b) a closable member;
- (c) an elongated member rotatably secured to said closable member, said elongated member including a first connector, and a rotator clevis secured to the elongated member; and
- (d) a latch plate assembly hingedly secured to said closable member, wherein said latch plate assembly includes a handle and a latch lever extending from said handle, said latch lever in mechanical communication with said rotator clevis; wherein hinging said handle causes said elongated member to rotate.

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Claim 2. (currently amended): The latching system of claim 1 wherein said elongated member base includes a second connector adapted to engage a portion of said base, and wherein said first and second connectors are secured at opposite ends of said elongated member.

Claim 3. (original): The latching system of claim 1 wherein said latch plate assembly includes a base plate; and wherein said handle is hingedly secured to said base plate.

Claim 4. (currently amended): The latching system of claim 1 wherein said elongated member includes a rotator clevis secured thereto, and wherein said latch plate assembly further includes a latch lever extending from said handle, said latch lever in mechanical communication with said rotator clevis, whereby when said handle is hinged relative to said base plate said latch lever causes said elongated member to rotate.

Claim 5. (currently amended): The latching system of claim 4 1 wherein said rotator clevis includes a tube having at least one fork extending therefrom.

Claim 6. (original): The latching system of claim 5 wherein said latch lever includes an engagement member having at least one opposed knob extending therefrom, wherein said at least one opposed knob engages said at least one fork of said rotator clevis.

Claim 7. (original): The latching system of claim 3 wherein said base plate includes a beak member hingedly secured thereto, and wherein said handle has an elongated opening defined therein, said elongated opening being adapted to receive said beak member.

Claim 8. (original): The latching system of claim 3 wherein said handle is hingedly secured to said base plate by a pivot pin.

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Claim 9. (original): The latching system of claim 8 wherein said latch plate assembly includes a spring for holding said handle in an open position relative to said base plate.

Claim 10. (original): The latching system of claim 7 wherein said handle includes a beak striker plate secured thereto and at least partially disposed in said elongated opening.

Claim 11. (original): The latching system of claim 10 wherein said beak striker plate defines a cam surface, wherein said cam surface is adapted for sliding contact with said beak member.

Claim 12. (original): The latching system of claim 1 wherein said elongated member comprises an elongated shaft, and wherein said first connector comprises a first hook.

Claim 13. (original): The latching system of claim 12 wherein said base has a first keeper secured thereto, and wherein said first hook is adapted to engage said keeper when said closable member engages said base.

Claim 14. (original): The latching system of claim 2 wherein said base has first and second keepers secured thereto, and wherein said first and second connectors are adapted to engage said keeper when said closable member engages said base.

Claim 15. (original): The latching system of claim 1 wherein said handle is made of aluminum.

Claim 16. (original): The latching system of claim 15 wherein said handle is made by an extrusion process.

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Claim 17. (original): The latching system of claim 7 wherein said beak member is constructed as a fuselink, whereby said beak member is easily broken without damaging the remainder of the latching system.

Claim 18. (original): The latching system of claim 1 wherein said closable member is adapted to engage said base, and said connector is adapted to engage a portion of said base when said closable member engages said base and said elongated member is rotated.

Claim 19. (original): The latching system of claim 1 wherein said handle includes a handhold end and a hinge end, and wherein said handhold end has serrations defined therein.

Claim 20. (original): The latching system of claim 12 wherein said first hook comprises a tube having a hook member extending therefrom, wherein said elongated shaft is received in said tube and said first hook is secured to said elongated shaft.

Claim 21. (original): The latching system of claim 20 wherein said first hook comprises stainless steel.

Claim 22. (original): The latching system of claim 21 wherein said first hook is made using a casting process.

Claim 23. (currently amended): A latching system for securing a first object to a second object, said latching system comprising:

- a) a shaft assembly secured to said first object, said shaft assembly including an elongated member having at least one connector and a rotator clevis secured thereto; ;  
b) a hinged latch plate assembly secured to said shaft assembly, said hinged latch plate assembly including a handle, and a latch lever in mechanical communication with said rotator clevis; ; and  
c) at least one keeper secure to said second object; ;

wherein hinged movement of said handle causes rotational movement of said elongated member and cooperation between said at least one connector and said at least one keeper.

Claim 24. (original): The latching system of claim 23 wherein said shaft assembly includes a shield portion for rotationally securing said elongated member therein and for securing said shaft assembly to said first object.

Claim 25. (original): The latching system of claim 24 wherein said shield portion comprises a pair of spaced inner shield members and an outer shield member, wherein said inner shield members and said outer shield member cooperate to form a tube through which said elongated member extends.

Claim 26. (original): The latching system of claim 24 wherein said latch plate assembly further includes a base plate secured to said shield, and wherein said handle is hingedly secured to said base plate at a first end thereof.

Claim 27. (original): The latching system of claim 26 wherein said latch plate assembly further includes a beak member hingedly secured to said base plate at a second end thereof.

Claim 28. (original): The latching system of claim 27 wherein said handle has an elongated opening defined therein, said elongated opening being adapted to receive said beak member.

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Claim 29. (original): The latching system of claim 23 wherein said elongated member comprises an elongated shaft, and wherein said at least one connector comprises at least one hook.

Claims 30-42 (withdrawn)

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